

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4550
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIURT
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN
USMISSION SINAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 9729

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PORG, IS, LE
SUBJECT: VISIT OF AMBASSADOR JAMES LEONARD AND MR. NATHANIEL HOWELL
TO ISRAEL, JULY 25-17, 1978

REF: A) TEL AVIV 9649 B) JERUSALEM 2035

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: DURING TWO DAYS IN ISRAEL, AMBASSADOR
LEONARD AND MR. HOWELL FOCUSED ON THE SUBJECTS OF THE
UP-COMING GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND THE RENEWAL OF THE UNIFIL
MANDATE. THEIR PRINCIPAL MEETINGS WERE WITH DEFENSE
MINISTER WEIZMAN, INTELLIGENCE CHIEF GAZIT, UN ME PEACE-
KEEPING COMMANDER GENERAL SIILASVUO, MFA DIRECTOR GENERAL
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EVRON AND MFA DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION AFFAIRS
RONN. LWONARD FOUND ISRAELIS FAVORABLY IMPRESSED
WITH UNIFIL'S PERFORMANCE, DESPITE THEIR EARLY SKEPTICISM,
AND WILLING TO USE THEIR INFLUENCE WITH LEBANESE CHRISTIANS
TO CREATE THE CONDITIONS IMPORTANT TO THE RENEWAL OF THE
UNIFIL MANDATE ON SEPTEMBER 19. MFA OFFICIALS EXPRESSED
CONSIDERABLE CONCERN ABOUT THE NUMBER OF ANIT-ISRAELI

ACTIVITIES IN THE UN, INCLUDING THE RECRUDESCENCE OF THE ZIONISM/RACISM ISSUE, AND URGED US TO DO ALL WE COULD TO OPPOSE IT. END SUMMARY.

2. LEONARD'S MEETINGS WITH WEIZMAN AND SIILASVUO HAVE BEEN REPORTED SEPARATELY IN REFS A AND B RESPECTIVELY. WEIZMAN WAS POSITIVE TOWARDS THE MOVEMENT OF THE LAF TO THE SOUTH AND TO THE INTRODUCTION OF UNIFIL TROOPS INTO THE BORDER REGION AND SAID HE WOULD USE ISRAEL'S INFLUENCE WITH THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS TO PROMOTE THESE ENDS. (PRESENT INDICATIONS ARE THAT SUCH INFLUENCE MAY NTO BE SUFFICIENT TO THE TASK.) SIILASVUO REACTED FAVORABLY TO LEONARD'S USGGESTION THAT AERIAL SURVEILLANCE OF SOUTH LEBANON, AT GOL REQUEST, MIGHT HELP REASSURE GOI THAT NO PALESTINIAN BUILD-UP IS TAKING PLACE IN UNIFIL-CONTROLLED AREA.

3. AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, LEONARD RECEIVED AN EXTENSIVE RUNDOWN OF UN ISSUES OF CONCERN TO THE ISRAELIS. RONN EXPRESSED GREAT UNHAPPINESS AND FRUSTRATION OVER THE SUCCESS OF THE PLO IN STEADILY INCREASING ITS INFLUENCE WITHIN THE UN MACHINERY. HE TOOK AS A PRIME EXAMPLE THE PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE AND THE "SPECIAL UNIT" ON PALESTINIAN RIGHTS WITHIN THE SECRETARIAT. THE COMMITTEE HE SAID, HAS BECOME "A TOOL OF THE PLO", WHICH VIRTUALLY GHOSTWRITES ALL OF THE COMMITTEE'S OUTPUT. HE APPEALED TO LEONARD TO HAVE THE U.S. USE ITS INFLUENCE WITH THE SECRETARIAT TO ARREST
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PLO INROADS INTO THE SECRETARIAT ITSELF. HE NOTED WITH PARTICULAR CONSTERNATION THE NEWLY-DECREED OBSERVANCE OF PALESTINIAN SOLIDARITY DAY (NOVEMBER 29), WHICH RONN SAID VIRTUALLY PUTS THE UN SEAL OF APPROVAL ON THE CALL FOR ISRAEL'S DIS-APPEARANCE AS A STATE.

4. ALSO OF CONSIDERABLE CONCERN TO ISRAEL WAS THE ECOSOC RESOLUTION WHICH CALLED ON ALL SPECIALIZED AGENCIES TO RENDER ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE THROUGH THE PLO. HE NOTED THAT SEVERAL OF THE ORGANIZATIONS HAD ALREADY BEGUN TO IMPLEMENT THIS RESOLUTION, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE SECURITY COUNCIL HAD NOT ENDORSED IT.

5. AMBASSADOR LEONARD SAID THAT WE ARE WILLING TO HELP WHEREVER WE CAN, BUT OUR STAFF COVERING THE MIDDLE EAST IN NEW YORK IS QUITE SMALL AND OFTEN PREOCCUPIED WITH MAJOR POLITICAL EVENTS. HE URGED RONN TO ENCOURAGE THE ISRELI MISSION IN NEW YORK TO KEEP OUR MISSION INFORMED OF SECOND-LINE ISSUS WHICH MIGHT OTHERWIST ESCAPE ITS ATTENTION.

6. TURNING TO THE UPCOMING GENERAL ASSEMBLY, RONN SAID IT WAS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN BECAUSE THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY SEEMS TO FUNCTION IN A VACUUM, AS THOUGH IT WERE A WORLD OF ITS OWN, IRRESPECTIVE OF WHAT IS REALLY HAPPENING IN THE MIDDLE EAST. ALTHOUGH HE USED THE TERM WITH SOME RESERVATION, RONN SAID THE ARABS HAVE A "MASTER PLAN" FOR UNDERMINING ISRAEL IN THE UNITED NATIONS THAT THEY HAVE PURSUED RELENTLESSLY FOR SEVERAL YEARS. THE ZIONISM/RACISM RESOLUTION, WITH ITS IMPLICIT DELEGITIMIZATION OF THE JEWISH STATE, WAS A MAJOR STEP DOWN THIS ROAD. ALTHOUGH THE RELATIVE SETBACK THE ARABS HAD RECEIVED IN OBTAINING APPROVAL OF THIS RESOLUTION CAUSED THEM TO LOWER THEIR PROFILE FOR SEVERAL YEARS, IT NOW SEEMS THEY WILL TRY TO REVIVE THE ISSUES AND BUILD ON IT IN THE NEXT GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

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7. RONN ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE IRAQI SANCTIONS RESOLUTION INTRODUCED AT THE SSOD AND THE POSSIBILITY OF A CHALLENGE TO ISRAEL'S CREDENTIALS IN THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE.

8. MOST OF THE MEETING WAS DEVOTED TO THE DETAILED DISCUSSION OF ISSUES LIKELY TO COME UP IN VARIOUS UN COMMITTEES.

(FULL MEMCON BEING SUBMITTED BY AIRGRAM.) LEONARD PLEDGED U.S. SUPPORT WHEREVER POSSIBLE AND URGED THAT OUR MISSIONS IN NEW YORK CONTINUE THEIR CLOSE COOPERATION WHICH THEY HAVE HAD IN THE PAST.

9. THE CONVERSATION WITH DIRECTOR GENERAL EVRON ALSO CONCENTRATED
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ON THE NEXT GENERAL ASSEMBLY. AMBASSADOR LEONARD URGED THAT ISRAEL USE ITS STILL CONSIDERABLE DIPLOMATIC INFLUENCE WITH THE WEO'S, WHILE WE CONCENTRATED OUR EFFORTS ON THE LDC'S. ON MAJOR ISSUES WE CAN GO OVER THE HEADS OF THE UN DELEGATIONS AND DEAL DIRECTLY WITH FOREIGN MINISTERS AND THUS TRY TO CONTAIN THE WORST DAMAGE. BUT WE CLEARLY CANNOT USE THIS APPROACH ON EVERY ISSUE, AND MANY HOSTILE RESOLUTIONS ARE BOUND TO BE ADOPTED. EVRON IN RESPONSE ARGUED THAT IT HAS BECOME HARDER IN RECENT YEARS FOR ISRAEL TO OBTAIN EUROPEAN SUPPORT IN THE UN, NOT ONLY BECAUSE ARAB PRESSURE AND INFLUENCE ON EUROPE HAS INCREASED ENORMOUSLY, BUT ALSO BECAUSE THE EUROPEANS PERCEIVE U.S. SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL AS DIMINISHING, THEREBY TAKING THE PRESSURE OFF THEM TO STICK THEIR NECKS OUT FOR ISRAEL. AMBASSADOR LEONARD DEMURRED, SAYING THAT ALTHOUGH THE STYLE OF OUR DEMARCHES TO THE EUROPEANS HAD CHANGED DURING THIS ADMINISTRATION, WE CONTINUED TO URGE THE EUROPEANS TO DO NOTHING WHICH WOULD DAMAGE THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS.

10. THE QUESTION OF ISRAELI COMPLIANCE WITH THE UN ARMS EMBARGO ON SOUTH AFRICA WAS ALSO RAISED (SEE TEL AVIV 9649). EVRON MADE NO EFFORT TO FURTHER DEFINE ISRAEL'S POSITION BUT SAID HE WOULD PASS OUR VIEWS CONCERNING THE NEED FOR SUCH A CLARIFICATION TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER.

11. THE DISCUSSION WITH GENERAL GAZIT COVERED MUCH OF THE SAME GROUND AS THAT WITH WEIZMAN, ALTHOUGH GAZIT WAS CONSIDERABLY MORE DISPUTATIOUS THAN WEIZMAN REGARDING THE NEED FOR THE LAF TO MOVE SOUTH AND FOR TOKEN UNIFIL UNITS TO MOVE INTO THE HADDAD-CONTROLLED BORDER STRIP. LIKE WEIZMAN, GAZIT WAS POSITIVE IN HIS EVALUATION OF UNIFIL'S PERFORMANCE TO DATE. GAZIT FELT THAT SYRIA AND THE PLO HAD A CONTINUING INTEREST IN MAINTAINING UNIFIL PRESENCE, AND HE
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PROFESSED TO HAVE LITTLE DOUBT THAT THERE WOULD BE ANY DIFFICULTY IN HAVING THE MANDATE RENEWED AS LONG AS IT REMAINED IN SYRIA'S INTEREST TO DO SO. THE SOVIETS WOULD NOT OPPOSE

IT UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES.

12. IN ALMOST EVERY MEETING WITH ISRAELI OFFICIALS IN WHICH LEBANON WAS DISCUSSED, THE IDEA OF INTERPOSING A UN PEACE-KEEPING FORCE BETWEEN THE CONTENDING FORCES IN ALL OF LEBANON WAS BROUGHT UP BY THE ISRAELIS. WEIZMAN PROPOSED A 16,000-MAN INTERNATIONAL FORCE AS A FACE-SAVING DEVICE WHICH WOULD PERMIT THE SYRIANS TO WITHDRAW THEIR ADF TROOPS (WHICH HE THOUGHT THEY WOULD LIKE TO DO BUT FEAR A DAMAGE TO THEIR PRESTIGE), WHILE GAZIT PUSHED THE IDEA OF A THIN INTERNATIONAL COVER FOR THE PRESENT 30,000-MAN SYRIAN CONTINGENT. IN CONTRAST TO WEIZMAN'S POSITION, GAZIT STRESSED HE DID NOT WANT TO SEE THE SYRIANS WITHDRAW IN REALITY, BUT MERELY TO "INTERNATIONALIZE" THE FORCE IN ORDER TO REASSURE THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS THAT THEY WILL NOT BE LEFT AT THE MERCY OF THE SYRIANS ALONE.

13. AMBASSADOR LEONARD ON EACH OCCASION RESPONDED THAT WE THOUGHT THAT THIS IDEA WAS A NON-STARTER UNLESS SOMEHOW A NATIONAL CONSENSUS IN LEBANON, SUPPORTED BY SYRIA, COULD BE DEVELOPED IN FAVOR OF IT, AND EVEN THEN IT WAS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT THE UN COULD FIND CONTRIBUTORS WILLING TO COMMIT ENOUGH TROOPS TO MAN SUCH AN OPERATION. AT PRESENT, ONLY THE CHRISTIANS SEEMED TO FAVOR SUCH A FORCE. IT WAS NOT REALISTIC TO THINK THAT SUPPORT FOR A LIMITED OPERATION LIKE UNIFIL COULD BE PARLAYED INTO AN INTERNATIONAL FORCE TO INTERVENE IN AN INTRACTABLE SITUATION LIKE LEBANON.

14. FINALLY, MESSRS. LEONARD AND HOWELL HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH A BROAD SPECTRUM OF ISRAELI POLITICAL FIGURES AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, AT A DINNER HOSTED BY AMBASSADOR LEWIS, FOR A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL DISCUSSION OF THE SITUATION IN LEBANON. THE GUESTS INCLUDED TRANSPORT MINISTER MEIR
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AMIT (DMC), MKS MOSHE ARENS (LIKUD, CHAIRMAN OF DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE), AMNON RUBINSTEIN AND AHARON YARIV (DMC) AND MAJ. GEN AVRAHAM ORLY, CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR FO THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES.
LEWIS

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